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Letter dated 30 May 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the forty-fourth monthly report of the Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) (see annex). The report covers the period from 23 April to 22 May 2017.

There has been no change with regard to the destruction of the remaining aircraft hangar or the ability of the OPCW Technical Secretariat to confirm the condition of two above-ground stationary facilities. In his note to the OPCW Executive Council, the Director General indicates that this lack of change is due to the security situation, which precludes safe access to all three sites.

I take note of the Director General's statement that the documents requested by OPCW to help to clarify some of the outstanding issues related to the declaration made by the Syrian Arab Republic have now been received. I further note that high-level consultations on this matter will resume, although the precise timeline is still under consideration.

The clarification and resolution of the outstanding issues related to the declaration by the Syrian Arab Republic are essential and the anticipated resumption of the high-level consultations would be a welcome development. The international community must have confidence that the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic has been fully eliminated. I strongly encourage the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with OPCW in this regard.

The OPCW fact-finding mission in the Syrian Arab Republic is continuing its work. On 4 May 2017, I transmitted to the members of the Security Council the report of the mission regarding the incident that occurred on 16 September 2016, which involved allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Umm Hawsh (S/2017/400, annex). The report indicated that two women reported to have been killed in the alleged incident had been exposed to sulfur mustard. The mission also received a mortar reported to be connected to the alleged incident and found that it contained sulfur mustard.

The mission is also continuing its investigation of allegations concerning the use of chemical weapons in the Khan Shaykhun area in southern Idlib on 4 April 2017. On 18 May 2017, I transmitted to the members of the Security Council a status update of the mission regarding the reported incident (S/2017/440, annex). The update outlined the activities of the mission in that regard, including with respect to the collection of biomedical, biological-environmental and environmental samples, all of which indicated exposure to sarin or a sarin-like substance.

Please recycle

The findings in both of the above-mentioned reports once again leave me with the deepest concern regarding not only the unjustifiable use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, but also the effect of such use on the confidence of the international community in its non-proliferation architecture. I call upon all those involved in the use of such weapons to immediately cease those actions. The effect on the Syrian people is wholly unacceptable, while the global consequences of the eroded international norm against those weapons are far-reaching.

Following an assessment of the report of the fact-finding mission regarding the incident in Umm Hawsh, I note that the investigative team of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism has been instructed to finalize its plans to conduct an in-depth investigation. The Mechanism is also reviewing the status update of the mission on the allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun.

I am pleased to inform you that, further to my announcement on 27 April 2017, Edmond Mulet (Guatemala) assumed the post of the head of the independent three-member panel to lead the Joint Investigative Mechanism, effective 2 May 2017. I am confident in his abilities to ensure independence and impartiality in the work of the Mechanism.

The work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism to identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic is of critical importance. I again call upon all States to support both the fact-finding mission and the Mechanism.

As previously determined by the Security Council, the use of chemical weapons anywhere constitutes a threat to international peace and security and is a serious violation of international law. I hope that the Security Council will come together to ensure that such weapons are never used again.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

Annex

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled "Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme", prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of OPCW Executive Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), both dated 27 September 2013, for transmission to the Security Council (see enclosure). My report covers the period from 23 April to 22 May 2017 and fulfils the reporting requirements of Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013.

(*Signed*) Ahmet **Üzümcü**

Enclosure

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

Note by the Director General Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme

Background

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter "the Council") at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter "the Secretariat") is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.

2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities" (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation "in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1".

3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria" (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015) noting the Director-General's intent to include reports of the OPCW Fact Finding Mission (FFM) in Syria, along with information on the Council's discussion thereof, as part of the monthly reporting pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). Similarly, the Council, at its Eighty-First Session, adopted a decision entitled "Report by the Director-General Regarding the Declaration and Related Submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-81/DEC.4, dated 23 March 2016), noting the Director-General's intent to provide information on the implementation of that decision.

4. The Council, at its Eighty-Third Session, adopted a decision entitled "OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism Reports on Chemical Weapons Use in the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-83/DEC.5, dated 11 November 2016). In subparagraph 12(a) of that decision, the Council decided that the Director-General shall "regularly inform the Council on the implementation of this decision and incorporate information regarding the implementation of this decision into his monthly reporting to the United Nations Security Council, through the United Nations Secretary-General, regarding EC-M-33/DEC.1".

5. This, the forty-fourth monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions and includes information relevant to the period from 23 April 2017 to 22 May 2017.

Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of Executive Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1

6. Progress by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:

(a) The Secretariat has verified the destruction of 24 of the 27 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. The security situation still continues to preclude safe access both for the Syrian Arab Republic to destroy the remaining aircraft hangar, which stands ready to accept the explosive charges, and for the Secretariat to confirm the condition of the two stationary above-ground facilities.

(b) On 16 May 2017, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its forty-second monthly report (EC-85/P/NAT.3, dated 16 May 2017) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.

Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities

7. As reported previously, all of the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic that were removed from its territory in 2014 have now been destroyed.

Activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decisions EC-81/DEC.4 and EC-83/DEC.5

8. As reported previously, an invitation was sent to the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic, H.E. Dr Faisal Mekdad, and his delegation to resume high-level consultations to address the unresolved issues related to the Syrian Arab Republic's declaration, in accordance with Council decision EC-81/DEC.4 and paragraph 6 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5. In preparation for these consultations, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted on 18 May 2017, at the request of the Secretariat, additional documents and information intended to help clarify some of the outstanding issues concerning its initial declaration and subsequent submissions. This material is being translated and will be analysed by the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and discussed with the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic during the forthcoming talks, the precise timeline for which is still under consideration. The Director-General will report to the Council on the outcome of the consultations.

9. In accordance with paragraph 11 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the first inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre took place from 26 February to 5 March 2017. As reported previously, samples were taken by the inspection team and were sent to OPCW designated laboratories for analysis. The Secretariat has now received the analysis results and completed the inspection reports.

Other activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic

10. An amendment to the tripartite agreement between the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the OPCW, and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, and an amendment to the contribution agreement between the OPCW and UNOPS were finalised and have been signed by the Director-General and UNOPS' Director for the Middle East Region. The amendment to the contribution agreement is now in force. This signed amendment to the tripartite agreement has been subsequently delivered to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for the third and final signature, which is expected shortly. These amendments will extend until the end of December 2017 the support provided by UNOPS to the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab

Republic, and ensure that the necessary administrative and logistical support is provided to the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM).

11. As requested by the Council at its Seventy-Fifth Session (paragraph 7.12 of EC-75/2, dated 7 March 2014), the Secretariat, on behalf of the Director-General, has continued to brief States Parties in The Hague on its activities.

12. As at the cut-off date of this report, four OPCW staff members were deployed as part of the OPCW mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, for the purpose of annual routine maintenance of the remote monitoring systems installed at four destroyed underground structures.

Supplementary resources

13. As previously reported, a Trust Fund for Syria Missions was established in November 2015 to support the FFM and other remaining activities, such as those of the DAT. As at the cut-off date of this report, contribution agreements totalling EUR 9.7 million had been concluded with Canada, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Monaco, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union.

Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria

14. During the period under review, the FFM continued its work regarding the allegations of use of chemical weapons on 4 April 2017 in the Khan Shaykhun area of southern Idlib in the Syrian Arab Republic, which reportedly resulted in the deaths of over 80 people, including children, and injuries to hundreds of others. A Note entitled "Status Update of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria Regarding a Reported Incident in Khan Shaykhun, 4 April 2017" (S/1497/2017, dated 12 May 2017) was issued by the Secretariat to summarise the activities conducted by the FFM so far.

15. As reported previously, the results of the analyses of biomedical samples collected from three victims at autopsy and from seven individuals undergoing treatment at different hospitals indicated exposure to sarin or a sarin-like substance. Results of the analyses of biological-environmental samples (birds) and environmental samples (soil and vegetation) collected by witnesses and/or representatives of non-governmental organisations also indicated exposure to sarin or a sarin-like substance.

16. As mentioned in Note S/1497/2017, planning is under way in liaison with the United Nations regarding a possible visit to the alleged site of the incident at Khan Shaykhun. In this regard, the Director-General addressed a letter to the United Nations Secretary General on 29 April 2017 requesting the logistical and security support of the United Nations, in accordance with relevant existing arrangements, for the deployment of an FFM team to Khan Shaykhun as early as possible. The assistance requested includes the engagement of personnel who can effectively liaise and negotiate with armed opposition groups in the area in order to guarantee safe and secure access to the FFM team. On 4 May 2017, the United Nations Secretary General replied to the Director-General's letter and formally confirmed that the United Nations would provide support with the obtainment of necessary security clearances and other logistical arrangements. A representative from the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy to Syria has been appointed to assist the FFM in operational planning.

17. On 29 April 2017, the Secretariat also addressed a note verbale to the Syrian Arab Republic requesting the Syrian Government's assistance and cooperation for the safe and effective deployment of an FFM team to Khan Shaykhun. H.E. Dr Faisal Mekdad, in a letter dated 8 May 2017, confirmed that the Syrian Arab Republic would provide support to the team to ensure its safety on Syrian Government-controlled territory. Two notes verbales were subsequently sent to the Syrian Arab Republic on 12 and 15 May 2017, in preparation for the deployment of the FFM team to Khan Shaykhun.

18. On 9 May 2017, at the request of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Secretariat made available to all States Parties two notes verbales dated 8 May 2017, transmitting information on cases of alleged transport and use of toxic chemicals in the Syrian Arab Republic. Another note verbale (dated 16 May 2017) was circulated on 17 May 2017.

19. With regard to the investigation of the allegations of use of chemical weapons at Um-Housh in September 2016, a Note by the Secretariat entitled "Report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria Regarding the Incident of 16 September 2016 as Reported in the Note Verbale of the Syrian Arab Republic Number 113 Dated 29 November 2016" (S/1491/2017, dated 1 May 2017) has been submitted for the consideration of States Parties, and was also forwarded to the JIM. In the report, the FFM confirmed that the two female casualties reported to have been involved in the incident in Um-Housh had been exposed to sulfur mustard. Furthermore, the FFM has determined that the mortar, which was handed over by the experts of the Russian Federation's chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defence team to the authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic and was reported to be connected to the described incident in Um-Housh on 16 September 2016, was a munition containing sulfur mustard.

20. Guided by Council decisions EC-M-48/DEC.1 and EC-M-50/DEC.1 (dated 23 November 2015), as well as United Nations Security Council resolution 2209 (2015), the FFM has continued to study all available information relating to the allegations of use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Conclusion

21. The main focus of the future activities of the OPCW mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will be on the activities of the FFM and on the implementation of Council decisions EC-83/DEC.5 and EC-81/DEC.4, as well as on the destruction and verification of the remaining aircraft hangar, confirmation of the status of the two stationary above-ground facilities, and annual inspections of the underground structures already verified as destroyed.